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Michael Andrews
at the Hayward,
'Caught on a Train'

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Living through the lens

By Peter Conrad

JANET MALCOLM: Diana and Nikon—Essays on the Aesthetic of Photography. 162pp. Gollancz. £13.95. 0 87923 272 0

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WESTON J. NAEF (editor): Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885. 260pp. Albright-Knox Art Gallery and Metropolitan Museum of Art. £17. 0 87099 128 0

The camera, that obnoxious, innocuous box, is still experimenting with its identity and testing its power. For some photographers, it is a courtly sycophant, beautifying whatever it looks at; for others, it is a means of defamatory and accusatory, pitilessly distorting or perhaps in a case like that of Edward Weston under curio into the semblance of a pear — mysteriously abstracting it. Either way, the photographer's eye is not the blandly non-committal lens Isherwood assumed it to be when he compared his own moral abstinence with that of a camera. The photographer prides himself, whether like Keaton he is fluttering his compliant victim or whether

like Weegee he is deriding them, on the literal untruth of his replica. The picture is either a gauzy and glamorous improvement on the actuality, or a lurking indictment of it. Thus does the new medium assert its power, by retouching and redeeming or (through those cruel lenses which Weegee used to twist Marilyn Monroe's face into a rubbery funhouse mask) destroying the messages it is supposed to be neutrally transmitting.

Both Janet Malcolm in *Diana and Nikon* and Max Kozloff in *Photography and Fascination* understand and are troubled by the medium's arrogation of power over its material. They know that, to control this tendency, the camera's aesthetics must also be its ethics. Photographers are exploiters of an experience from which they can detach themselves, thanks to the mediating agency of the artificial optic and the box behind which they crouch. As for living, the photographer can let his lens, like the disdainful Axel, do that for him. This is why, for a photographer like the Chaucery Hare (memorialist of the alienated teddium and tattered proprieties of *Interior America*), possession of a camera was a therapeutic relief from a reality which he couldn't cope. Driven to nervous collapse by his work at an oil refinery, he took to photographing the sad and squalid industrial hell which oppressed him, and in so doing symbolically relieved himself from it.

The photographer's retirement behind the lens signals his opting out. Siegelitz on a voyage to Europe in 1907 was disgusted by the vulgar congestion of shipboard life but, looking down imperiously from the first-class deck into steerage, he saw the mob obligingly rearrange itself into a composition, governed now not by human affray but by severe and impersonal shapes—a diagonal drawbridge, the funnel at right angles to it. "A round straw hat" which is no longer the property of its domineering owner but an item in the still life Siegelitz has assembled in readiness for his camera. Similarly, Weston in 1923 photographed his mistress after a night of quarrelling and sexual frustration, sullen and bleary-eyed. In his *Daybooks* he records the recommitment details of the night before and in morning after, but instantly transforms commitment into technical calculation.

"I drew close—I whispered aggression, the public presence. But a girl, kneeling beside the body, who must be the victim's wife or his girlfriend, looks up, sees the camera aimed at her, and despite her anxiety automatically smiles. Her ghastly grin implies—despite Janet Malcolm's ethical disquiet— that the camera's intruded subjects deserve no mercy."

The recurrent concern of Janet Malcolm's essays is this liability of the camera to an unfeeling, irresponsible candour. She is a New Yorker critic, and has the humanistic scrupulousness of that paper. Like Pauline Kael exorcising the liberal pastoralists of Clint Eastwood, she writes about the probity of photographs like Avedon's satiric and necrotic portraits of ageing celebrities, their faces subsiding into wrinkled pouches and puffy flab, or Herta and Paul Amirson's ripped torso of a cancer patient, or Harry Callahan's too pure and formal images of architectural facades. She rebukes the pretensions of the cameraman (Avedon declares that the subjects of his portraits come to him to find out who they are, and invite him to tell the lacerating truth about themselves or his indecent aestheticism (Donald McCullin comes upon a putrefying Biafran corpse, and can't help organizing the horror into a design, lining it up inside the frame of a rusty bicycle wheel). She argues that the camera's temptation to an oil refinery, he took to photographing the sad and squalid industrial hell which oppressed him, and in so doing symbolically relieved himself from it.

Two complementary images sum up Kozloff's view of the indignity, even the obscenity, of photography. One is Paul Strand's "Blind" (1916)—an elderly mendicant, labelled blind by a placard, with one eye closed, the other glaucously averted. She is the camera's archetypal, abject quarry. The photographer sees her, but she can't see him looking at her and can't convert her disability into an image. Strand ensured that he had the same power over those of his subjects who could still retaliate with their eyes. He wanted "to photograph people without their being aware that they were being photographed", and to stand up on them in the New York streets, he devised a dummy lion on the side of his camera, so he could feign shooting at right angles to his actual prey. The second of Kozloff's images is a Weegee accident from Conboy Island. A young man has been dragged from the water to be artificially resuscitated on the sand. Three men—the rescuers perhaps—

For him photography is an act of aggression, the public presence. But a girl, kneeling beside the body, who must be the victim's wife or his girlfriend, looks up, sees the camera aimed at her, and despite her anxiety automatically smiles. Her ghastly grin implies—despite Janet Malcolm's ethical disquiet— that the camera's intruded subjects deserve no mercy.

With landscape, the camera is, as Kozloff sees it, equally brisk and brutal in its assertion of ownership. Commenting on *Era of Exploration* (an exhibition, held in Buffalo and New York City, of landscape photography in the American West, 1860-88), he remarks that the camera, in surveying those tracts of wilderness, was undertaking a series of "proprietary gestures", annexing the terrain in the act of viewing it. The photographers Kozloff favours are therefore coldly masterful, refusing to tolerate any abrogation of their medium's power—Nadar, begged by Delacroix to destroy a portrait which made him look a gruesome and sadistic effigy, declines—or else demonstrating the medium's control over reality by obscuring or inverting objects, mocking the fallibility of the human eye—the clogged darkness of Ralph Mealey's prints, or Moholy-Nagy's distorting aerialism, looking down through the rectilinear colubine of the Eiffel Tower or flattening, shortening and rendering visually unintelligible the "View from the Transporter Bridge".

Although Gisèle Freund's *Photography and Society* is for the most part a tellingly orthodox Marxist account of photography's democratic and industrial origins, its liveliest passages revert to this problem of the photographic image's trachery, its talent for telling seditious lies, its unprincipled agreement with whatever prejudiced caption is assigned to it. Photography, Freund argues, mechanized the image, stereotyped the human face, even (in the form of picture postcards) commercially packaged our memories. Photography is at first a democratic boon, enabling the poor and disenfranchised to own self-images (formerly a luxury reserved to their betters), nowadays enabling every package-holidaymaker with a camera strap round his neck as a citizen of the world. But it has treacherously strayed from its original ideology. The communards of 1871 were photographed on the barricades,

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commentary

Motion stills

By Douglas Johnson

Regards sur la photographie en France au XIX^e siècle
Petit Palais

Morey 1830-1904: La Photographie du Mouvement
Musée Carnavalet

Bonjour Monsieur Lartigue
Grand Palais

It is natural that French art critics should be striving to recover their national complacency and asking whether Paris has not now recovered its place as the centre of the art world. Natural, because this autumn Paris has organized for itself a whole festival of photographic exhibitions, and art specialists are always ill at ease in the presence of the photograph, just as a film director like John Grierson, dismissive of those colleagues who were besotted with purely photographic splendours, proclaimed that when a director dies he becomes a photographer, so an art critic like Gombrich can condemn a painting that has been influenced by the mechanical device of photography. The image is painfully easy to read, the appeal is on the surface, we are not invited to share the artist's imaginative secrets, or so Gombrich tells us. The photograph is given the short change of talent, and in the world of commodities, his subjects, too, have become commodities, bits and pieces to be manipulated into dramas that are too obvious or beautiful that are more pretty.

And what is one to do with the sheer quantity of material? We are told that in 1817 some half a million photographic plates were sold in Paris, and that in 1862 more than half a million photographs were reproduced in Great Britain. For well over a century almost anyone has been able to possess his own gallery of photographic pictures and the difficulty of choice is daunting. No one can even estimate the number of photographic documents which have been collected in the Département des Estampes et de la Photographie in the Bibliothèque Nationale (only the number of cubic metres which they fill can be recorded). One great photographer alone, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, last

year donated more than two hundred thousand examples of his work to the French state. How can any selection be made?

The 180 "chefs d'oeuvre" which the Metropolitan Museum of New York has persuaded the Bibliothèque Nationale to exhibit in the Petit Palais (Regards sur la photographie en France au XIX^e siècle, until November 23), and the 150 photographs which the Association des Amis du Musée Lartigue chose to show until last week on the other side of the road in the Grand Palais (Bonjour Monsieur Lartigue) are all the more welcome for this reason.

The exhibition at the Petit Palais involves some of the French pioneers of the camera who were considered in French Primitive Photography, a book with an introduction by André Jammes and Robert Sobieszek, recently published by Aperture, New York, and based on the exhibition that was held in 1969 at the Stieglitz Centre of the Philadelphia Museum.

It is clear that within two or three decades of the inventions which stemmed from the work of Daguerre, Fox Talbot and Niepce, photography was being used for an astonishing variety of purposes (although the word "photographie" only began to be widely used in the 1850s). Book illustrations, architectural records, studies for the use of artists and all types of portraits, were soon accompanied by photographs which aspired to documentary, aesthetic, moralizing, pornographic or intimate effects. In their uniformly black classical frames, the items in this collection at the Petit Palais present us with a full, though summary, survey of the speed with which the possible uses of photography were seized upon.

The exhibition takes us from the earliest examples of the daguerotypes, the Lillins, Blanquards, and the like, to the late 1840s took a number of indoor pictures of relatives and friends — subjects who were always engaged in some activity such as knitting or telling beads — to the century was making great play with the use of shadow in his street and urban scenes, which not only illustrate ordinary individuals but also emphasize the alleyways, doorways, trees and signposts which surrounded the individuals.

Picture concepts

By Robin Robbins

Artist and Camera
Mappin Gallery, Sheffield

"There is a great possibility here for being boring, but then much of life is boring," John Baldessari's apologia for his random photographing of American commercial television ads just, fortunately, suit up the American's travelling exhibition. Artist and Camera, which opened at the Mappin Gallery, Sheffield, on October 25. Among the twenty-four artists (and partnerships) sampled, theories of what they are up to range from the pioneer Sol LeWitt's assertion that in concept art the idea is nearly all, so that execution may be perceived (he even confesses that "It doesn't really matter if the viewer understands the concepts of the artist by seeing the art"), to Bill Beckley's preference for commercial glossiness in his pictures with their clumsy non-stories, to the even more radical of Conceptual Art photographs that were intentionally un-beautiful because the idea was the most important thing.

In fact some exhibits do show a professional photographer's preoccupation with technique, as in Tim Head's optical games, Simon Read's dim and messy experiments with perspective, and John Hilliard's variations of shutter speed,

usually negative: the information that Hamish Fulton's atmospheric sky and seascapes were taken on a fifty-mile walk is more beautiful than the effortful artist signs, the view in Richard Long's moorland photographs which bring the right accessibility to remote, lonely, short-lived or otherwise unrecognizable works. Miranda Strickland, Constable's catalogue gives a useful and necessary context with more words by so well as about the artists. But when the verbiage is shouting die, Long's "Circle in Africa" remains to haunt the mind.

After Sheffield, the Artist and Camera exhibition goes to the City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent (November 29-January 1), the DLI Museum and Art Centre, Durham (January 10-February 8) and the Cartwright Hotel, Bradford (February 14-March 29).

The Greater London Council is organizing a photography competition with prizes of up to £1,000. The theme is "Metropolis—portrait of a city", any large city being allowable. All who live, work or study in the Greater London area are eligible for fourteen years of age and over. There will be two sections, one for a pictorial of six prints, the other for individual entries. More information and entry forms can be obtained after November 30 from "Metropolis Photography Competition 1981", G.L.C. Room 88, County Hall, London EC3A 7PP.

Between these chronological limits there are many examples of the striking and the intriguing. There is the death mask of the curé d'Ara; Paul Verlaine with his absinthia in a café; Victor Hugo posing before a back-cloth in Guernsey (and a selection from the Hugo family album); a heavy-featured Napoleon III; a seduction scene in which an anxious, well-lit, semi-nude white woman confronts a sleepy, indolent black prince. Famous buildings and distant exoticism, together with those carefully posed portraits in which the folds of garments are pinned and pegged and the background is manufactured to order, are displayed side by side with the work of the photograph *flâneur*, confronting us with the apparently immediate and spontaneous.

It goes without saying that all this is attractive, impressive and interesting. But what is its significance? The question is easy enough when we consider the work of the photographer. We can see readily enough how certain groups are contemporary to the paintings of Courbet, or certain landscapes parallel the canvases of Corot. A portrait of an unknown woman by Etienne Carjat, dating from the early 1860s, attracts us because of its tenderness and because of the skill with which the hands, the scarf, the eyes and the head-dress are composed. In this sense, the quality of the photograph is aesthetic and pictorial. It is a creation where forms and shapes possess their own rights. But is this what the photograph of the nineteenth century should be for us?

One photographer who sought for a truer depiction of reality is Etienne-Jules Marey, who is also the subject of an exhibition in Paris (Morey 1830-1904: La Photographie du Mouvement, Musée Carnavalet, until November 14). Marey was experimenting on the subject of motion, he conceived on rather, as he put it, "Je reviens" of a photographic film or recorder which would register the successive movements of a bird's wings. In the 1880s, by means of a chronophotographic technique which he called the *ciné-projecteur*, Marey was able to record the continuity patterns of movement. But even as an instantaneous representation of motion it has been argued that Marey's work is not so much a scientific movement. It has often been recalled that, according to Rodin, his sculpture of St. John (which was conceived in the same year, 1878, that

Marey was consulting his American counterpart, Muybridge), who have been inconsistent with photographic truthfulness, since it is both feet on the ground, but that more successfully conveyed the movement than did Marey's walking figures.

It should be easier to understand the nature of photographic art from the Lartigue exhibition. Here is one man who for a whole long life-time has handled the camera with joy, and who has accompanied his photography with a detailed journal. His world of wealth and beauty, there Mistinguette is far even in her long curls where children leap for joy on the beach and elegant crowds flock to race meetings seems to have been created by an artist. Lartigue is not a reporter. It would be a strange historian who would use his work as a source. Lartigue is an artist, who takes himself as he points his camera. A photograph of grandeur comes a photograph of Lartigue's own childhood: foreign tourists at a beach today represent the dead beach of yesterday; Bibi in London, 1926, is a past marriage. The frame image records a convenience between photographer and spectator.

News prints

By John Naughton

Photographs by Don McCullin
Victoria and Albert Museum

Don McCullin is a bearer of such unrelentingly bad news that had he lived in the Middle Ages he would surely have been executed. In the Victorian era, his last but not his least, he was an inevitable figure. In his earlier days, he was a member of a Phantom Pen hospital, for example, a wife and baby with her husband flailing his amputated limbs in agony. In another frame, a young Cambodian woman, who in her husband's face, the face of a fallen North Vietnamese soldier, is framed by his plundered personal effects: a few cartridges, some documents, a wallet containing photographs of his wife and children. In the modern world, though, McCullin's pictures are more apt to be seen in the ads for digital clocks and perfumes, a reminder of the beauty of life in faraway countries of which we know next to nothing and care less. The irony is not lost on him, or on the organizers of the exhibition. One exhibitor of the example, shows some of his Vietnam pictures in the context of the issue of the Sunday Times Magazine in which they appeared. Part of the context is a picture of a Chief of the tank in the legend "Quite simply, the best tank in the world".

The exhibition includes pictures from all the major cities he has photographed—Cyprus, Biafra, India, Bangladesh, Israel, Lebanon. It also includes some of his photographs of Britain, given over to the issue of the evening paper. "Underprivileged children waiting for their evening meal, Bradford, 1969," for example, or "Bracton boy whose leg was amputated in a scrapyard accident and whose only mode of transport is a baby's pram, 1976".

McCullin is so well known by now that his wretched images have become part of our collective subconscious. The photograph of a Turkish woman, dishevelled and bloodstained, huddled in a doorway, and brother-in-law has, I imagine, helped form most people's memory of that particular civil war. Yet the familiarity of his images does not, oddly enough, breed contempt. One goes to this exhibition knowing what to expect. Yet the more powerfully the work is seen, the more one could have expected. Few people, emerging from it, could maintain much optimism for the future of humanity. One is left, like the recent past, one is left to suppose, only worse. McCullin's photography, in this sense, is the art of darkness.

commentary

The air balloon goes pop

By Frances Spalding

Michael Andrews
Hayward Gallery

Pissarro and Michael Andrews make a surprising duo at the Hayward Gallery. Pissarro's vision is essentially hopeful and solid; Andrews' is a sense of anxiety and alienation. If the former makes even his clouds tangible, Andrews' figures dissolve into the night they inhabit. The one makes natural light his subject; the other uses garish electric light, often neon, to heighten unreality.

Despite the photo-realism of his 1970s paintings, Andrews impresses us less through his sense of appearance than by his ability to suggest an underlying mood and symbol. A painter of psychology, he gradually reveals layers of meaning, which the simplicity of his recent work at first belies. The first painting to greet the eye as the visitor enters the gallery is "The Colours Room", a scene in a Soho drinking club with Lucien Froid, Francis Bacon and others crowded into an uncertain space. Description is deliberately off-hand to convey the ragged nature of the scene. Andrews himself, after tinkering for five years with this painting, felt dissatisfied. He resolved from then on to avoid stodgy paint, excessive revisions and all obvious signs of effort. Despite this, "The Colours Room" is crucial in Andrews' career. In it he discovered a subject which he was to make peculiarly his own: the behaviour of individuals within a group.

In his subsequent painting "The Deer Park" we find a party treated on an epic scale. Andrews quotes in the background from the landscape of Velázquez's "Boar Hunt", while elsewhere are portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Rimbaud, and recollections of party scenes when from Italian cinema. But the main reference is to Norman Mailer's "The Deer Park", a social satire focussed on a Californian movie community. The novel portrays drifting and boredom, filled and unfulfilled desire, and Andrews conveys his sense of dislocation by use of distortion and incomplete statement: figures merge into nothingness; a balcony seems to float in space. The whole painting is composed of fragments and editorial cuts.

Roman runes

By John Dreyfus

David Jones: Inscriptions
Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 9 Dering Street, W.1.

David Jones realized how difficult it could be for some people to come to grips with his "Inscriptions" exhibited at Anthony d'Offay until November 22. Even for people of great perception and taste and appreciation, he wrote, "sometimes cannot see the point of these lines of lettering which I do from time to time." Some of the difficulties arise from the texts of these inscriptions, which are often in Anglo-Saxon, Welsh, Latin or Greek.

Comprehension is harder, too, for those who do not belong, as the artist did, to the Roman Catholic Church, or who have no knowledge of the artist or his life. Nicolette Gray explains in her introduction to the exhibition catalogue (18pp., 16 colour plates, £1.50) that many of his frequently repeated texts are contained for him "not only statements of the fundamental truth of the Christian faith, but his sense of revelation working throughout history and of all human activity and perception interpenetrated with this light". Mrs Gray provides translations of the inscriptions in the catalogue entries.

She declares that David Jones never learnt lettering, and this is in one sense true; but as Douglas Overdon pointed out eight years ago (in his introduction to the National Book League exhibition of Jones' work, he helped Eric Gill, for whom he worked as assistant in lettering jobs such as the war memorial in the chapel of New College, Oxford in 1921—though his work there consisted only of painting the letters within Eric Gill's outlines).



"Study of a head for a group of figures No. 4" (1967), an oil from the exhibition reviewed here.

Andrews has always been interested in states of mind and of dislocation by use of distortion and incomplete statement: figures merge into nothingness; a balcony seems to float in space. The whole painting is composed of fragments and editorial cuts.

A surprising feature of the originals of his inscriptions now on show is what they reveal about his technique and his character. The artist used to send out photographs of some of his inscriptions, Christmas, and others have been reproduced in book-jackets or illustrations. Examination of the originals reveals the laborious technique he used to produce work which appears at first glance to have been executed quickly in spontaneous reaction to phrases.

Close inspection of the originals conveys a feeling of tenseness, anxiety and depression which I had not felt when studying reproductions of David Jones's inscriptions. Though they are often superlatively puzzling, detailed examination reveals their complex artistic and personal interest.

Ritzy

By Sara Selwood

Glynn Boyd Harte: London/Paris/ New York
Francis Kyle Gallery

"London—Paris—New York" is a couturier's tag, and the intended air of elegance is exuded by Glynn Boyd Harte's exhibition. Over the past eighteen months he has drawn the friends he never accepts (the missions), places and objects he associates with his favourite cities. His images are evocative, though only for the initiated. For instance, you have managed to suppress the memory of ink caricatures used as a pop sign, Glynn Boyd Harte's "Au Cochon Rouge" brings

interest in states of mind and of dislocation by use of distortion and incomplete statement: figures merge into nothingness; a balcony seems to float in space. The whole painting is composed of fragments and editorial cuts.

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Close inspection of the originals conveys a feeling of tenseness, anxiety and depression which I had not felt when studying reproductions of David Jones's inscriptions. Though they are often superlatively puzzling, detailed examination reveals their complex artistic and personal interest.

It all back. But you really need to belong to the crowd that flits from the Chelsea Hotel in New York to the Plaza Hotel in New York, clutching its copy of the *Plan de Paris* to grasp the full significance of the majority of works in this exhibition. If, on the other hand, you tend not to find in your pockets sachets of sugar from the Plaza Hotel, New York, torn-off tickets from the Musée de l'Homme or packets of 7 O'Clock blades, works like "Amongst Souvenirs" will mean little to you. All you can do is appreciate the tastefulness of the compositions: the red Paris map and tin of Sardines, a Paula wrapped in equally red paper, set off by a single fuchsia and placed lovingly on a red and white chequered cloth. But beyond the crisply ironed tablecloths, lies, as intellectual and emotional void.

series of paintings on magazine illustrations and photographs of pop stars, and his reading of an Watts. R. D. Laing and Kierkegaard directed him towards the idea that the ego could be symbolized by the balloon, at times buoyant, at others empty and flat. At the Hayward the balloon floats over deserted landscape, is engulfed in a city of skyscrapers and neon lights, reappears hanging like a spectre at night over Waterloo Bridge, and elsewhere casts its shadows on a bench.

A marked change of style accompanies the appearance of this balloon. Andrews adopted the spray-gun to convey an airy sensation, and it has continued to play an important role in all his subsequent work. It deposits paint on the nappe of the canvas like a soft bloom and contributes to the impersonal, almost disquieting ease of his recent paintings, which are now based almost entirely on photographs. Gone is the playful teasing with appearance for slightly macabre effect. Now, we glide at ease through his work like his tropical fish which, with their brilliant uniforms and roles as prey or predators, continue his interest in behavioural patterns. If in his latest series, the hunters, deer and Scottish scenery remind one of Landseer, these paintings have an electrical apprehension of the psychology of the hunt. It is this that makes the surprisingly old-fashioned subject modern.

Andrews' close dependence on photographs is in some ways regrettable. It causes a reduction of three-dimensionality to planar recession, of texture to tone, and it diffuses interest because the eye focuses the watercolour studies made from direct observation often have an edge over the finished acrylics, being more alert to chance and to the subtle nuances of the medium. If Andrews is a highly original watercolourist, his small works, throughout the show, catch our further side to his character. These can be tender and informal, qualities strikingly absent from his large scale record of his family in his Norwich garden. Here, though, positions are integrated, each member of the family is shown in chilling existential isolation.

Supporters

By Andrew Hislop

Moan Strenks
Bush Theatre

"Everyone needs support, there's enough humour in the world as it is," says Lawrence in his new play by Alan Williams. Williams gives us four pathetic characters in an out-of-season Morecambe holiday chalet—a failed comedian, Norman Usher, and his resentful wife, Phoebe; Norman's mentally retarded brother, Frank, and Frank's "friend" Lawrence.

All of them lack emotional or material means of support. Norman has to pay for Frank, but deprives him of the support of Lawrence, whom he kicks out of this Chatter of Usher, even though his mum's lover is in spiritual contact with Edgar Allan Poe. Phoebe refuses to comfort the departing Lawrence but gives him a little money. Lawrence, despite his moods, offers Frank love and understanding but Frank also wants possessions. To Frank's question "You're a clever bloke, why Lawrence can only reply that he is not a materialist. Frank suffers further loss because "the Borrowers" steal days of his life from his pocket even when he has his hand in it. Phoebe and Norman can't stand each other most of the time.

The four are not without humour. There are individual moments of strength and some portentously underplayed pharic exchanges, but (perhaps because of the play's partial origins in improvisation by the company) the result is a collection of character exercises, all excellently performed by the cast but lacking a controlled momentum.

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The National Portrait Gallery Collection

By Colin Ford

The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1856, when photography was already seventeen years old. Empowered to acquire "likenesses of persons eminent in British history", it might have been expected to embrace the new medium eagerly. Instead, it restricted itself to painting, sculpture, drawing and such traditional media. Why?

The Gallery's first trustees (among them Carlyle, who thought a portrait "small light candle by which the Biographies could be read, and some human interpretation be made of them") undoubtedly perceived the shortcomings of early photographic portraits. Many photographers were businessmen, first artists, a poor second. Richard Beard, for instance, who established London's first portrait studio, was a coal merchant who bought a daguerreotype licence strictly as a business proposition (ironically, it was to make him bankrupt). And the available technology was limited. Maria Edgeworth, subject of the oldest portrait photograph in the Gallery, described visiting Beard's studio: "It is a wonderful mysterious operation... the whole apparatus and ston on a high platform under a glass dome casting a smoky blue light making all look like spectres."

No wonder only the very strongest personalities succeed in looking human in photographs of the period, and even they seem stern and unsmiling. They could scarcely smile when protruding from a vast wooden camera. Take two famous examples. Alfred, Lord Tennyson and his friend W. H. Brookfield were,

according to contemporary accounts, always joking, keeping each other in fits of laughter. One searches their earliest photographs in vain for any hint of this.

As late as 1926, Roger Fry was moved to write: "One day we may hope that the National Portrait Gallery will be deprived of so large a part of its grant that it will turn to fostering the art of photography and will rely on its results for its records instead of buying acres of fashionable practitioners in paint." By then, the imperfect and slow chemistry of the early days had been superseded and "instantaneous" photography, even colour, was possible. Yet the National Portrait Gallery had only taken one nervous step towards the medium, starting in 1917 its "National Photographic Record", an archive of famous faces taken by a London studio portraitist.

Fry's plea came in his introduction to a book of Victorian portraits by the photographer he considered "far and away the most distinguished artist ever to have used the medium". Julia Margaret Cameron, a friend and, for twenty-five years, neighbour of Tennyson, she was encouraged to take up photography as a hobby in 1853 and was soon producing the most penetrating portraits of the poet laureate and the "famous men and fair women" to whom he introduced her. Though some found their way into the Gallery's reference archive, over the years, it was not until after 1972, when the Gallery finally took Fry's advice and established a Department of Film and Photography, that her work entered the primary collection alongside portraits in the older media.

A priceless album of her best work, assembled for Sir John Herschel, was sold at auction for the world record price of £52,000, its

purchaser was refused an export licence (the first time this had happened with photographs) and the Gallery raised the purchase price by public appeal (the first and, so far, only time historic photographs have been the subject of such an appeal anywhere in the world).

The "Herschel Album" joined three albums of engravings in the Gallery by two even earlier masters, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. These, too, had been purchased at what was a world record in 1973, £32,178.50p. As Adamson later pointed out, this was the first time anywhere in the world that photographs had been counted among national art treasures.

Since these priceless acquisitions, the National Portrait Gallery has mounted a score or so of photographic exhibitions and published almost as many catalogues. Attendance figures and sales have been high and its kind of photography, historic and contemporary, seems to attract immediate chords of recognition with those who are as uncomfortable when confronted with "fine art" photography as they are with paintings. They recognize portraits: after all, most of them take them and collect them.

In a way, the most significant exhibition containing photography was planned before the Department of Film and Photography even came into being. The *Masque of Beauty* (1972) was an exhibition which explored feminine beauty through the ages and came to soon for more than a modest number of photographs to be infiltrated among the paintings and engravings, but they were a popular and successful element. Surprisingly, none of the critics, and none of the public (at least within hearing) questioned the propriety of showing photographs alongside the other portraits. It was taken for granted that this was their rightful place.



Karin Horney, the psychoanalyst, photographed by Lotte Jacobi New York, 1947.

Animal vegetables

By Aaron Schari

BEN MADDOW:

Edward Weston: His Life and Photographs
299pp. Phaidon: Aperture. £14.95.
0 89 181 043 6

Edward Weston's reputation is largely based on his photographs of peppers and shells, bones, bananas, seashells, pumpkins, artichokes split in halves, and Swiss chard—these lifeless objects which yet, for him, convey a feeling for life. His nude and portraits also establish him as one of America's great photographers.

Weston took an estimated 4,000-6,000 photographs in his fifty-two years. Of these, the 128 facsimile plates in the splendidly produced *Edward Weston: His Life and Photographs* form a cross-section of his work. All were originally conceived, printed, and enlarged and the direct method appealed to his purist instincts.

The pathetic story of Weston's life is told with sensitivity by Ben Maddow. Vulnerable though he was, Weston's clear vision of his life and art, poured out in his letters and diaries (the *Diary*), has survived him in his most trying times. His intimate thoughts about his art and about his huge appetite for sex are found in this book.

Weston's writings are also perceptive about the troubled world outside. He reveals his hatred for war, for big cities, business, and for the automobile. He found American middle-class sexual puritanism equally repugnant, and did much in his own life to confound it.

In 1923 Weston moved from Los Angeles to Mexico where he stayed for four years. It was a crucial phase in his career. He became acquainted with the muralists Orozco, Rivera, and their friends. They also appreciated his pictures of the painted facades of polychrome, of unpeeled village life unpolluted (but for a few hours) because of the

his 8 by 10 plates. His Mexican odyssey, not unlike that of Gauguin in the South Seas (but far less romantic), was also an escape from civilization.

My dissent for that impossible village of Los Angeles, given me Mexican, revolution, smallpox, poverty, anything but the plague spot of America. Los Angeles. . . To think that Weston had to abandon the fair country of California to such a fate.

In Mexico, Weston was stunned by the faces he saw. Only the gods, he said, could have created some of them. Others from the blood, "so cruel, so savage, so capable of any crime". His Mexican portraits fill the frames, no extraneous matter is allowed to detract from the magnificence of the heads; he achieves a total concentration on the subject, without reinforcing the image with contrived composition. The purity of vision became the hallmark of his work.

In Mexico, Weston finally mastered the camera which now had become so responsive to his desires, that his work achieved a genuine spontaneity. In Weston's own words: "In the application of camera principles, thought and action so nearly coincide that the conception of an idea and its execution can almost be simultaneous."

His singular close-ups of fruit and vegetables were not a search for the object's expressive qualities, but a hard, factual realism "for rendering the very substance and quietness of the thing itself". View of Weston's photographs are introduced as metamorphoses of the object. Not was it his intention to dwell on their strangeness. Instead, they evoke a matter-of-fact dignity, the

Fred Meyer's photographs—which with brief texts by Peter Hebblethwaite, Peter Nichols and others make up *The Vatican: Portrait of a State and Community* (226pp. Gill & Macmillan, £18, 0 7171 1083 4)—have as their background the magnificent buildings and prospects of the Vatican City. The main subjects, however, are the people who work in or are drawn to the walls of the orb. Here are the holiday-makers and the pilgrims, nun-masters and the telephone exchange, more guards repairing tapestries, security monitors, quiet-looking, and

beauty intrinsic in their material and form.

Weston first experimented with this style in 1925 when, in Mexico, an ordinary lavatory bowl, a "gay, enamelled receptacle of extreme beauty", inspired him with its contours. His response to that fixture were not unlike the he brought to his photographs of nudes. He denied that any symbolic meaning was intended—though it is hard to believe that such an amnesia as Weston could study the rectangle of ground glass without any reference to sex.

A temporary diversion in Weston's photography occurred in 1931 to the death of the Depression as he was recruited into the PWA (Public Works of Art Project) to contribute to a photographic record called "The American Scene", a forerunner of the famous Farm Security Administration photographs. Weston's temperament, and the photographs he took for the project, do not appear in Maddow's book.

Weston left the PWA project after about four months and returned to his retreat in Carmel in Northern California where he remained until his death in 1958. There, on the wild coast at Point Lobos, he took some of his finest photographic close-ups. Even when Weston steps back and surveys a landscape of barren rocks and gorges, scarred earth or sand dunes stretching into the distance, his raised horizon line leaves only a sliver of light for sky. The effect, as in his weed, weathered tree trunks and gnarled roots, is one of standing over the sun embracing it, and breathing life into every intimate detail.

priests at work in the Vatican's secret archives. Everywhere there are theocrats running this great pomp of services in St. Peter's, and various public appearances of the Pope—Paul VI, during his Papal skullcap on a windy day and an impressive shot of him at night being carried through an adoring crowd in a palanquin. Cardinal Freeman and Bishop Muckey are caught off duty by the many shots of the new Pope (the palanquins or smoking cardinals

Documents of the English lowlands

By Ronald Blythe

NANCY NEWHALL:
P. H. Emerson: The Fight for Photography as a Fine Art
266pp. Phaidon: Aperture. £16.95.
0 91234 58 4

The name P. H. Emerson drifts around in East Anglia's subconscience in a still quite powerful way. His masterpieces, "Gathering Water", "Women Raking", "Towing the Reed" and especially "Coming Home from the Marshes", have acquired the icon-like properties of pictures into which a community stares in search of its soul. The late Nancy Newhall, whose major work was this biography of the great and strange nineteenth-century photographer, says Emerson's interpretation in words and images of what she calls "the Netherlands of England" is worthy to stand beside Auguste Percey, the geological surveys of the American West and the Farm Security Administration's America in the 1930s.

She sees him as the first true photographer-poet. Arriving as he did on a frenetic photography scene in which so many talents were striving for artistic reputations on a par with those of painters and engravers, it could not have been a better moment for a young man with his cantankerous mixture of puritanism, inactivity and inner conviction to state his case. He was twenty-seven, a qualified doctor of medicine, a New Englander as well as English (American law allowed him this duality), married, a novelist, tall, fair and stylish. Together with these assets—and that of being the cousin of Ralph Waldo Emerson—he had the good fortune to find in Norfolk and Suffolk, on a first visit, his special territory of the imagination. This was in August 1883 when he first saw Southwold and Great Yarmouth.

It had all begun in Rome, where

the Puritan, agnostic and anatomist in him were each profoundly shocked by Italian art. With a naturalistic philosophy, curiously similar to that expounded by Constable in his lectures, Emerson at once set about finding his own truth-to-nature creative responses, particularly with respect to human beings rooted in a landscape. The year before he found both his people and his place on the East Anglian coast, he had bought his first camera, and it was the revelation he received through its ground glass which gave him what Nancy Newhall calls his answer to the immutability of painting and sculpture. This intensification of the view in the lens was to remain for him the camera's ultimate glory, more marvellous than any print. He agreed with his East Anglian "peasants" when he allowed them to put their heads under his focusing cloth and they caught their breath with delight at a brilliance which they had never before encountered, and said, "Ah, if we could only get it like that!" Life, they meant.

Emerson had some lessons in photography, not from a photographer but from his old tutor in physics and chemistry at Cambridge. On the whole, though, he served no apprenticeship. He was one of those artists who need only the merest outline of instruction. Julia Margaret Cameron, of course, was another. Presented by her daughter and son-in-law with a lens and dark box—"It may amuse you, Mother, to try to photograph"—she turned her cool collar into a dark-room and a glazed henhouse into her glass-room and began to take pictures. Emerson revered her and his account of her work, included here, is fascinating. Although only half the age she was when she began her work, he was for a while equally obsessed and single-minded. He gave up medicine, brought his family to Southwold, found a local artist and naturalist (T. F. Goodall) to guide

him about the region and began work at once on the great series of pictures which were to fill *Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads*, *Pictures of Life in Field and Fen*, *Idylls [sic] of the Norfolk Broads*, *Pictures of East Anglian Life* and *Wild Life on a Tidal Water*.

These remarkable albums were received with every kind of hostility and criticism, and with some awe. The new photographic establishment, with its proliferating journals and medals and its attempts to place itself as an equal among the traditional arts, saw all that it preached and practised threatened by what Emerson called his Naturalistic Photography. Primarily, what the Photographic Society with its domes objected to in Emerson was his "differential focusing", as he himself called it. He said:

"The principal object in the picture must be fairly sharp, just as sharp as the eye sees it and no sharper, but everything else, and all other planes of the picture must be subdued... slightly out of focus, not to the extent of producing destruction of structure, or fuzziness, but sufficient to keep them back and in place."

But it is in another statement that Emerson sums up the genius of these entrancing work-photographs of men and women labouring in and around the Broads a hundred years ago:

"Nothing in nature has a hard outline, but everything is seen against something else, often so subtly that you cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. In this mingled decision and indecision lies all the charm and mystery of nature."

Nancy Newhall backs her long, detailed and utterly absorbing portrait of the conflictingly high-minded and humble Emerson with a witty account of the late nineteenth-century photographic world. She concentrates on such figures as O. G. Rejlander, Alfred Stieglitz, and most of all, the uncrowned

king of English pictorial photography, Emerson's *bête noir* Henry Peach Robinson, whose "Autumn" photograph in the world. Robinson had begun as a painter. Turning to the camera and adapting the techniques of genre-painting to it, he became enormously successful. "Any dodge, trick and conjuring of any kind is open to the photographer's use... It is his imperative duty to avoid the mean, the bare, the ugly, and to aim to elevate his subject, to avoid awkward forms, and to correct the unpleasingness of his subject by a judicious and streamlined, says Nancy Newhall, Robinson's ideas and devices are overwhelmingly still with us.

The wealthy Emerson, christened Pedro Enrique on his father's Cuban sugar estate, was as far from this skillfully manipulated and profitable photographic scene as anyone could be. But he was a man with a message who had a taste for dissent and even for a quarrel. He attacked the Robinson school and it reviled him. In the long course of this row, splendidly documented here, all the confused business of art-and-photography comes to the surface. Although he stirred it up and kept it on the boil for nearly twenty years, Emerson was never deeply upset by the battle. It allowed him to exercise a far from offensive high-and-mightiness and it drew him close to the subject of his controversial vision, the half-marine, half-agricultural society and its watery acres.

Having no other criterion in which to judge such a triumph, those who admired his work talked of artists such as Courbet and Millet. The East Anglian press was in no doubt about what he was getting at and its columns were filled with Tory rage by his exposure—in captions and essays, as well as photographs—of the miserable conditions in which the poor lived. Emerson, unlike the genre-photographers who combed the alleys and seafarings for beauti-

ful or striking faces, published his studies of a coastal people in order that they "would help in the understanding of this peculiar region and add to the outcry against abuses". He set down the local dialect and made himself familiar with all the local crafts and customs. And as a doctor he was expert in gauging standards of health and welfare in the district. His albums, though among the finest aesthetic achievements of the camera, are also early sociological documents. In Nancy Newhall's words, they were to make him "a prophet crying in a strange, dry, mechanised and mercantile wilderness".

In 1891 he gave it all up. In a letter sent to every photographic magazine he said that "the medium must rank the lowest of all arts... In short, through my lot in those who say that photography is a very limited art, I regret deeply that I have come to this conclusion". There was no overwhelming private grief in this repudiation. Emerson had tired of hobbies, tired of houses and places, tired even, it seems, of what he so uniquely was, an artist of the ground glass. He lived on until 1936, still taking some pictures. But the high period of his achievement was to be the 1880s. The second half of this lovely book consists of a great show of pictures from those now familiar bulks and features of his "peasants", all taken on a grey day "when possible"; the wheries "which Old Cromie painted in some of his pictures", and the toll and cold. The beauty and strength of it all too, such as would have naturally existed in such labour and in such a countryside.

Lewis Carroll—Victorian photographer (Introduction by Helmut Gernsheim; 93pp, 41 plates. Thames and Hudson, £4.95, 0 500 27171 2) is a selection of the Reverend Charles Dodgson's photographs of young girls, mainly from albums in the Gernsheim collection, University of Texas.

The Victoria and Albert Museum

By Mark Haworth-Booth

Photographs in art museums: the question is complicated, the lurch of confusion acute. Photography is so various in practice and intent that to assign specific values often seems like special pleading. However, one can classify four headings under which photographs are appropriately collected and exhibited in art museums.

First, there is an identifiable tradition of aspiration among photographers towards fine art, easel or gallery photographs. This tradition has usually contained a strong component of craft and the end product has often been the measured and framed photographic print. The 1840s partnership of Hill (a painter/photographer) and Adamson (a chemist) stands simultaneously at the outset and the pinnacle of this tradition, which is now the subject of some remarkable research and rediscovery.

Second, there is the generally recognized branch of photography as an applied art, one of the so-called Useful Arts of times gone by. Photojournalism, for example, is accepted as a necessary rhetoric with greater or less emphasis on print quality. Already there are grounds for mistaking the category, introducing the great Cartier-Bresson exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum 10 years ago. Carol Hogben stressed the origin of many of the pictures in *reportage* and wrote of the procedure of framing and exhibiting them as a transposition of medium "rather like a publisher bringing out a series of old radio broadcasts in the form of a book". Actually, of course, Cartier-Bresson has exhibited in galleries from the outset of his career, though Hogben was right to point to the double-life his photographs have led.

Third, in so far as it is not covered by the first two categories, photography is an investigation of appearance, of how the world looks after treatment by optical and chemical materials. This tradition has often preferred to exemplify photography first as a mirror or window then as a crystal ball. It is

questions accepted modes of vision and accepted use of photographic equipment. It feeds on the quotation "sense of Surrealism" elucidated by Susan Sontag.

Fourth, there is the kind of photography presented by gallery artists as art, often accompanied by a text which is intended to interact with photo imagery as an integral part of the complete work. I met the German conceptual artist Bernard Hill (a painter) shortly after they had exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and asked them which department had sponsored their show. It could have been, reasoned, either the Department of Photography, or the Department of Architecture and Design (the Bechers showed photographs of industrial buildings), or perhaps Special Projects. No, they were shown as Sculpture.

The four headings I have assembled are imprecise, inevitably, for such photographic work could be simultaneously. A particular case in point is the work of John McCullin, an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum until January 25. The V & A is not an entirely inappropriate place to hold the show: the Museum's emphasis on applied art is as strong as on fine art. There are problems, all the same. I have been trying to trace one of McCullin's photographs, *Dead*, as a salutary shock to the question: "How do you spell Cong?" In fulfilling a duty to the specific qualities of photojournalism, an exhibition such as McCullin's may simultaneously help us remember the past and contribute to the pool of ideas and modes in the arts.

The photographs in *To Build Jerusalem*—a photographic remembrance of British working class life, by John Cornman (Foreword by Len Murray, 192pp. Scorpion Publications, £3.95, 0 905906 27 6)—have been collected from a wide variety of sources and include "treasured people": they are accompanied by a text and commentary. The book attempts to convey "the changes in the circumstances, and aspirations of ordinary people" over the last

GORDON FRASER GF

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Introduction by Michael Hiley



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Evidence of emancipation

By Holly Eley

Lisette Model: a Monograph
100 photographs. Phaidon: Aperiure
£20.00

JANE DOWN:
The Gentle Eye
120 photographs. Thames and
Hudson. £6.
0 500 27204 2

KELLY WISE (editor):
Lotte Jacobi
187 photographs. Travelling Light:
Addison House. £17.50.
0 89169 029 8

In painting, literature and music men have always been more likely to achieve fame than women. This is not the case in the less-honoured art of photography, where female practitioners tend to be just as well-known as male ones.

Chance has played an inordinately large part in the history of photography. The quickening of women's emancipation, around the end of the nineteenth century, happened to coincide with the moment in which the camera began to be generally accessible. Women photographers are the main protagonists of at least three good recent novels, in one of them—Alon Leichuk's *At the risk of it*—photography is used as a metaphor for emancipation.

Julia Margaret Cameron was quick to realize the social advantages—as well as some of the artistic possibilities—offered by photography. Her example has continued to tempt women to believe that a camera might offer them not only social status and a measure of financial independence but also professional and artistic credibility. Lisette Model, Jane Down and Lotte Jacobi are among those who would seem to prove that this is indeed possible. Both Lisette Model and Jane Down are successful photographers. Lotte Jacobi, who started work with a large camera (an Ermanox, of which only nine were made), is primarily known for her relaxed and perceptive portraits of the famous.

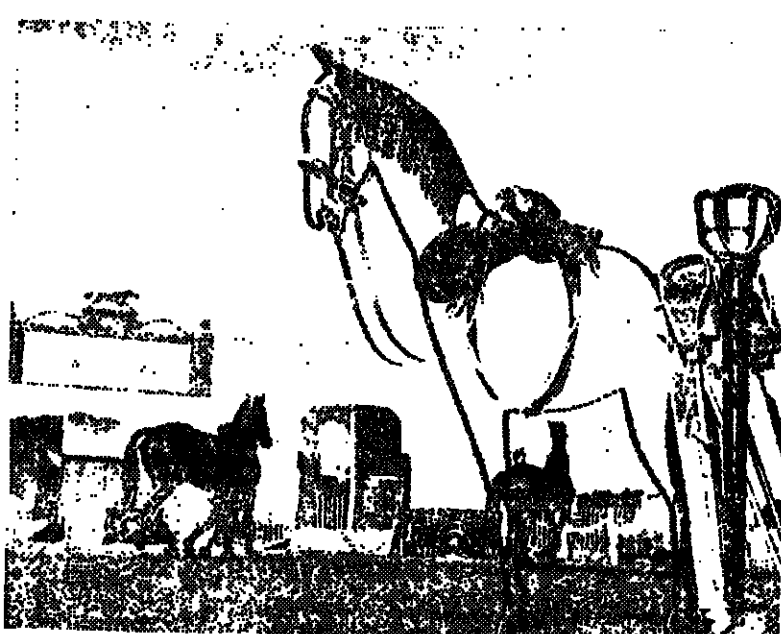
Lisette Model was one of Schindler's more gifted pupils at the Schwarzwald progressive school. Having added painting to her list of

distant accomplishments, she continued voice and music studies in France. But a dwindling private income obliged her to contemplate work, and, in the 1930s, she began to take pictures in order to learn to become a laboratory technician.

At the onset of the Second World War she moved to New York, where her "Promenade des Anglais" sequence, taken in Nice while she was still an amateur and extensively reproduced in *Lisette Model*, provided an entrée into photographic circles. She has worked consistently ever since. But *Lisette Model* is a disappointing, self-indulgent and cumbersome book. Most of art photography's pretensions are present; not least the provision of one shiny blank page for every grainy picture. *Lisette Model* is a fine photographic journal, so it is unfortunate that not one of her Harlem pictures—these taken for the *Life* series—delinquents on her jazz pictures for the cancelled *Le Monde* Hughes book—has been included. Her renowned *demi-monde* photographs (sailors and whores) are well represented, as are her ambitious, painterly interpretations of sculptural and architectural monuments. No doubt a few wealthy women's consciousness will be raised by *Lisette Model*, but one cannot help but feel that a gifted amateur who became a competent professional has been editorially ill-served.

The Gentle Eye is the antithesis of *Lisette Model*. Each of Jane Down's photo-essays, most of them created on assignment for *The Observer*, invites us to take a fresh look at worlds and personalities. Jane Down clicks the shutter in order to capture the comic or ironic aspect of an event or, in the case of portraiture, in order to document the feelings of her subject at that precise moment. Her self-effacing attitude is akin to that of a master-craftsman, and works in the interests of truth; this is particularly evident when we compare her 1959 "Edith Sitwell" with Cecil Beaton's more famous, stylized essays on the same subject.

Whether or not we acknowledge the influence of vision and technique, whether or not we are pleasantly aware of her affinity with Bill Brandt and Picture Post's Bert Hardy, we can only be impressed by the understated excellence of



"Windsor Horse Show 1960", from Jane Down's *The Gentle Eye*.

this inexpensive record of post-war Britain.

Photography can be said to be in Lotte Jacobi's blood. Her grandfather studied with Daguerre and his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren established their own photographic businesses throughout Germany. As James Fasanelli states in his introduction to *Lotte Jacobi*, "there are no rights in art which are not earned, especially when art emerges from commercial circumstances". Although she started in work in the family studio in Munich, it was not until she moved to dazzling 1920s Berlin that her personal style crystallized. Without doubt aware of the influence of August Sander, her concerns have always been with the inner self rather than with its social context. Her development of ideas derived from painting evolved into a highly personal, stylized kind of portraiture, most strikingly exemplified in her portrait pictures of friends such as Kurt Weill, Brecht and Käthe Kollwitz.

As a refugee from Nazism, working in the less anxious political climate of late 1930s New York, she was able to expand her ideas and her style greatly. Her work, though this freedom made her though less

immediately identifiable and commercial than that of Yousuf Karsh or Arnold Newman, the quasi-snapshot quality—her subjects caught slightly off-guard—was in fact her greatest strength. For own photographic businesses throughout Germany. As James Fasanelli states in his introduction to *Lotte Jacobi*, "there are no rights in art which are not earned, especially when art emerges from commercial circumstances". Although she started in work in the family studio in Munich, it was not until she moved to dazzling 1920s Berlin that her personal style crystallized. Without doubt aware of the influence of August Sander, her concerns have always been with the inner self rather than with its social context. Her development of ideas derived from painting evolved into a highly personal, stylized kind of portraiture, most strikingly exemplified in her portrait pictures of friends such as Kurt Weill, Brecht and Käthe Kollwitz.

Almost the only phase of Lotte Jacobi's career that might be ascribed to chance is her recent experiment with abstract photography. Edward Steichen has found her "photogenies" (Fox Talbot's term for images that are light-generated or formed by light). But neither he nor Minor White have ever fully appreciated these sensual statements of her present life of *Kunst und Natur* in New Hampshire.

Lotte Jacobi is like Jane Down in that she does not use the camera as an instrument for self-promotion. Her qualities, admirably reflected in Fasanelli's introduction and in Kelly Wise's foreword and choice of illustrations, combine to give us a portrait of one of the more distinguished artists of the camera.

Slide-shows

By Tristram Powell

ROBERT H. ALLSHOUSE (editor):
Photographs for the Tsar & Pioneer Colour Photography
Gorskii Mikhailovich
216pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95
0 281 98678 6

"Photography penetrates into the domains of knowledge... Man, exhibited visually by an interesting, ordinary subject, will leave behind." In this occasional slip of the tongue, the editor of the book, the exiled Russian photographer, Prokudin-Gorskii, an untrained pioneer of colour photography, shows to the world his own slide shows in the emigre community in Nice during the 1920s. Photographs for the Tsar & Pioneer is a collection of 200 colour plate negatives he brought with him to Russia in 1918, gives one a glimpse of the photographic work of the first decade of the 20th century. Apart from some of the most beautiful modern, technically superb. In fact this sweeping photographic tour of pre-revolutionary Russia, the result of a year's work by Prokudin-Gorskii under the patronage of Tsar Nicholas II, is no other comparable early, colour photographic survey in existence today.

The theory of colour photography was known long before chemical discoveries made it possible to put into practice on a commercial scale. In 1861 a coloured ribbon was photographed through red, green and blue filters, and the three plates were projected on to a single screen, using the same filters. Prokudin-Gorskii had evolved a more sophisticated method of colour photography, a highly qualified chemist who that mixture of scientific and high-minded educational motives that inspired a number of the photographic pioneers. He invented a filter that automatically shifted the filters in the camera, produced different exposures on separate plates, but in precise registration with each other, so technical limitations, as well as his official brief, restricted his subject matter to architecture, landscape and portraiture. These limitations are particularly evident in the case of prisoners so heavily manacled that they could hardly move under any circumstances, and in the only known colour photograph of Tolstoy, in a cane chair under a tree. Tolstoy, in a cane chair under a tree. Tolstoy, in a cane chair under a tree.

Every few months Prokudin-Gorskii returned from his travels and gave a slide show to the Tsar, at the palace of Tsarskoe Selo. Robert Allshouse gives an entertaining account of how, knowing the appalling bureaucratic and security problems encountered by travellers within the Russian Empire, Prokudin-Gorskii managed to gain the Tsar's enthusiastic support. A specially equipped Pullman coach, with a dark room was laid on for him. His landscapes, his richly dressed peasant figures, his ikon-filled churches, country residences, courtiers and palaces of Turkestan and Samarkand, all seem to radiate order and permanence. After 1917 Prokudin-Gorskii, taking most of his colour slides with him, travelled to Norway, London and finally to where he opened a photographic studio with his sons. The photographs were rediscovered in the 1930s by the Russian who, later, Princess Marie Pulchra, searching for colour, remembered a faded photo of a photographer who had shown photographs using the three-colour process.

Though these pictures are spectacular, colour photography was developed in a different direction. The autochrome process, a single plate with mingled green and red in the form of dyed potato starch and a more highly sensitized panchromatic emulsion, provided a series of shots taken between 1916 and 1918. Swigart looks at both in a long and intelligent interview with Swigart and a selection of photographs, suggests that the link between the pictures and the poetry is "an eroticizing of landscape".

Sculptural scraps

By Quentin Bell

ALBERT E. ELSEN:
In Rodin's Studio: A Photographic Record of Sculpture in the Making
Gorskii Mikhailovich
188pp. Phaidon. £10.95.
0 7148 1817 8

Here is a sample—a most impressive and delightful sample—of the wealth of the archives of the Musée Rodin. There are 157 illustrations, many of them beautiful, some of them odd or in various ways instructive; and for this alone £10.95 does not seem an excessive price.

In addition there is Albert E. Elsen's text; but this is a commodity less easy to assess. The professor is certainly erudite; he is one of our leading Rodinists; he has a good deal to say and what he says is of use to those who are concerned with the techniques of sculpture, and to those who are concerned with the history of art. But the matter of about importance. The author, who is very properly an enthusiast for his subject, might, I think, be astonished to discover how much smaller this latter class is than he supposes.

For with the hand of the artist, he takes for granted that Rodin was, in his time, quite simply "the world's greatest living artist". One cannot quite agree, but it would be foolish to quarrel with such feelings. What one must deplore is the language in which they are expressed: "Unlike Medardo Rosso and Brancusi, who personally photographed their sculptures as an aesthetic imperative, there is no evidence as yet that Rodin ever took a photograph."

This is a fair sample of this author's prose, and one feels that someone in the publisher's office should have been employed to simplify, clarify, and in fact to translate a work which deserves to be made clear and comprehensible.

The amateur who has met and surrounded the difficulties of states of mind. The surreal sense of displacement, its use of distortion and slow-working shock, first appeared in the nudes Brandt began taking in 1945 and which, when published in 1961, brought him wide acclaim.

Chilly nudes

By Frances Spalding

BILL BRANDT:
Nudes 1945-1980
100 illustrations. Gordon Fraser. £17.50.
0 8692 051 8

Lush blacks and technical mastery characterize Bill Brandt's photographs. After the grim of the war, the nude, the East, and Underground, this great documentary photographer has turned to creamy Belgavia for a series of upper-class squats. Nudes in bare rooms angle a leg towards the dawn outside, recline on well-upholstered sofas, or meditate on patterns in a Persian carpet. The titles "Belgavia", "Campden Hill", "St John's Wood", "Hampstead"—reaffirm the importance of location though the subject is always the nude, place of possession perhaps having more importance for the photographer than the possessed.

Brandt manipulates nude photography like no other. His use of mirror and distortion may have been influenced by the nudes Kertész produced in the 1930s, but the initial impulse behind these photographs was the discovery of an old camera with a wide-angle lens. This produced images like these caught on a convex mirror or like the perspectival distortions that Brandt had admired in Orson Welles's film *Citizen Kane*. It allowed a surrealist element to re-surface in his work. Having trained for three months in 1929 under Man Ray, he had absorbed the surrealist way of looking at the world. His photographs underline the dissonance in social reality, between the glamour of the Mayfair and the scene in the kitchen below the parlourmaid testing the bath water. But these photographs document, they do not dream-like

Albert Elsen's text will, in all probability, already have dealt with those graver problems which are presented by the sculpture. For, of course, in a collection of this kind—the accumulated scraps and arts of a studio—there are bound to be some pieces which have been left unfinished, and for very good reasons. Of course there are relics of a different kind, as for instance the photographs of the model who posed for the "Bronze Age", photographs intended to prove that Rodin did not use life-models for that work—which indeed they do, but which also provide a wonderful commentary upon the whole idea of "truth to nature". Again, there are series of studies ending in a final (and wholly satisfactory) version for the so-called "Marly" and other photographs, corrected by the sculptor when, with a vigorous pen, records his modifications and his intentions. Even more dramatic is the resituation of Rodin's "Clenched Hand"—a mimed, angry, altogether disquieting member which has been photographed in a variety of situations emerging, quite horribly, from a simple fold of coarse drapery.

Things such as these are in no way to the artist's discredit. I do not think the same can be said about the version here illustrated of the "Porte d'Enfer", which does indeed look like Hell, so inept are its proportions; it is no wonder that the artist noted his dissatisfaction. Rodin's wildest folly—and he was certainly capable of folly—was surely the monument to Claude Lorraine intended for Nancy. Few painters could have easily been commemorated in sculpture, few solutions could be less satisfactory than that of Rodin. He projects a plinth upon which a furching painter balances, with difficulty, and from the midst of which a pair of frenzied horses and an only slightly less frenzied Apollo burst with insane elation. The effect is distressingly ridiculous.

As we have said, a studio record such as this is bound to contain oddities and inequalities, but Rodin was a very odd and very uneven genius.

The earliest photograph of London in Roger Whitehouse's *A London Album* dates from 1844: it was taken by Fox Talbot and shows Nelson's Column being constructed in Trafalgar Square. Like almost all of the photographs in this excellent collection it testifies to the importance of photography as documentary record, a function too often taken for granted or treated condescendingly.

Roger Whitehouse falls into neither of these traps. His approach is that of an enthusiastic historian, choosing his photographs because they capture people, buildings, vistas or phases of life at very specific moments of time. Nor does he make the mistake of believing that photographic images can be left to speak for themselves. Each photograph is carefully captioned, dated, and accompanied by a brief explanatory paragraph.

The photographic image provides us with a special way of relating ourselves to processes of change, and of checking back from the present to see how things once were. The Victorians themselves used photography in this way. Some of the best pictures in *A London Album* were taken by the Society for Photographing Relics of Old London, thanks to which we have here photographs of a seventeenth-century coaching inn in Warwick House in West Smithfield, and of St Mary Overy's Dock, Southwark. These pictures recorded buildings before they disappeared; others aimed to fix contemporary scenes that have now changed, though not recognition: an example is G. W. Wilson's photograph of Greenwich Pier in 1857 in which passengers are seen boarding a tall-funnelled steamboat. Beyond the black funnel, pale grey in the misty

states of mind. The surreal sense of displacement, its use of distortion and slow-working shock, first appeared in the nudes Brandt began taking in 1945 and which, when published in 1961, brought him wide acclaim.

His new book is unsettling. If found on a coffee table, this aesthetically Pleistocene calendar has no obvious theme other than the division into indoor and outdoor scenes and close-ups. Outdoors the nudes look cold, indoors they remain passive and unsmiling, giving the book as a whole a strange joylessness. The last of the images created by close-ups invites comparison with the sculpture of Arp and Henry Moore. But here flesh becomes as much inert matter as the pebbles and cliffs against which it is posed. Compared with the early sea-shore nudes in this book, where a body becomes a wave, an ear a shell on the beach, the recent photographs lack energy, a loss their artificial poetry does not disguise. Indoors, our reading of these images is complicated by the uneasy glamour that surrounds the nudes. Are they hired models or willing debutantes? Is their inviting mood deliberately intended to detach aesthetic appreciation?

If in Brandt's 1930s photographs the rich interest he had devoured inch by inch, he now reflects indignation by resorting to stammered, porn props. Some nudes are placed near fantastic still-lives. Careful manipulation of tone exaggerates public hair. Leather sofas, angle-poise lamps and rubber gloves do the rest. But the results are either ludicrous, banal or mannered, and never erotic. Pornography, the model and the photograph of Brandt, more committed to his camera than the nude, delights in its power to distort, select and rearrange reality. Never has the nude been subjected to such masterly mechanical treatment. It is surprising that that one woman exclaims, "But these photographs document, they do not dream-like

Checks and balances

By Peter Keating

ROGER WHITEHOUSE:
A London Album: Early Photographs recording the history of the City and its people from 1840-1915
307 illustrations. Secker and Warburg. £12.50.
0 436 57090 4

Memory Lane: A Photographic Album of Daily Life in Britain 1930-1933

Introduced by James Cameron
350 illustrations. Dent. £9.95.
0 460 0437 5

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river is a man-of-war "hulls" looking, as Dickens was to describe it, just a few years later in *Great Expectations*. "Like a wicked Noah's ark."

For obvious technical reasons, among the earlier photographs it is the buildings and streets that are most prominent. Human figures tend to become parts of a blurred and generalized activity or, more commonly, are posed unnaturally against their surroundings. Not that spontaneity is entirely absent. Among a number of snap-shots there are the river police testing for water pollution in Wapping, and a lamplighter perched high on his ladder intently cleaning a gas-lamp, while John Thomson's superb photograph of recruiting sergeants outside a Westminster pub in 1877 unites formality and naturalness in a balance appropriate to the subject.

Memory Lane is a far more casual compilation than *A London Album* and, curiously, the photographs it contains often seem far more dated than those taken sixty or seventy

years earlier. The reason for this lies partly in Roger Whitehouse's meticulous and personal selection, while no slanting policy, it is apparent in *Memory Lane*. But it also has much to do with changes in the social function of photography. The photographs here were often taken for their newsworthiness and are less satisfactory as independent images. The housewives checking food cupboards or cleaning household gadgets appear as controls and posed as the street urchins in Victorian slum scenes.

Yet there are, inevitably, some wonderful moments—a young, well-off and bored-looking couple of the 1950s celebrating in a Soho nightclub; air-raid wardens carrying a screaming child from a bombed house; a fearful pairing between an American serviceman and his British aircrewwoman girlfriend; and Sir Malcolm Campbell, holder of the land-speed record in the 1930s, surrounded by adoring schoolboys, his eyes gazing beyond them at some future attainment; there is a blissful smile on his face, and a smouldering cigarette in his fingers.

Collections collected

BRUCE BERNARD:

The Sunday Times Book of Photography: A Century of Extraordinary Images 1840-1940
262pp with 214 colour photographs. Thames and Hudson. £14.00.
0 500 54065 9

This gorgeous book began as an ambitious series in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, where Bruce Bernard is Picture Editor, and it ran into industrial troubles there in 1978. Few of the issues ever got on the shelves. All the pictures are printed in glorious colour, showing off the graphic richness that is killed by black-and-white printing. This is especially important for the early period, in which fixers and toners gave a startling range of colours, but also representing the real look of "vintage" prints of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Sunday Times Book of Photography is an accurate index to the direction photo collecting has taken in the last ten years. Bruce Bernard has been everywhere and apparently met everyone, persuading them to release all their

favourite pictures. As he is the first to acknowledge, his enthusiasm was fired by Sam Wagstaff's *A Book of Photographs* (1978), which presented its contents with a new accuracy of colour, together with a fresh elegance of choice and juxtaposition.

Bernard's book suffers from a few flaws of layout (wrong scale of reproduction of small originals, ugly juxtaposition—as with Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" opposite a nude by Paul Outerbridge) and some of the colour printing is over the top. The Fenton "Odalisque" of c. 1858 which the Export Licensing Committee allowed out of the country two years ago (against strong representation by graphic richness that is killed by black-and-white printing. This is especially important for the early period, in which fixers and toners gave a startling range of colours, but also representing the real look of "vintage" prints of the 1920s and 1930s.)

Also in providing much valuable technical information, Valerie Lloyd, Curator of the Royal Photographic Society, has compiled the notes on the principal photographic processes.

M. I.G.

From tyranny to tyranny

By M. E. Yapp

MICHEL SETBOUN:
Iran: l'Éclatement
Paris: Le Sycomore. 17.95.
2 86262 035 1

ABDAS:
Iran: La révolution confisquée
70 plates. Paris: Editions Cléart.
2 903410 01 1

One may tell the story of some notable event through photographs either by using photographs to illustrate a text or by the bolder course of disposing with captions and arranging the photographs to tell their own story, supported by their captions alone. Michel Setboun has adopted the first mode. In short chapters, each devoted to a theme and illustrated with clusters of black-and-white plates, he traces the development of the Iranian revolution chronologically through 1978 and 1979, beginning with the popularity of imperial Iran, moving quickly into the familiar scenes of popular demonstrations and street violence, and ending with glimpses of some of the problems of the newly established Islamic Republic. Abbas has chosen the second path and, aided by black-and-white photographs of better definition, has produced a shorter but more satisfying work. His presentation, however, follows the same route and his interpretation is very similar to that of Setboun. Both see a luxurious and tyrannical system overturned by popular enthusiasm and sacrifice and replaced by a more just and less tyrannical regime, whose tyranny, if anything, made worse by its incompetence.

But while photographic histories can tell part of the story well, other parts remain hidden from the camera. The popular demonstrations of August, 1978, to February, 1979, so vividly represented in the books, were the essential element in the overthrow of the Shah, but they were much more complex than is suggested. At least three elements, drawn from the middle class, the traditional bazaar and new urban immigrants, took part in these demonstrations. The first two were traditionally hostile to the Shah, but it was the presence of

the third element which was crucial to the success of the revolution. The historic economic expansion of the 1960s and early 1970s had resulted in an explosion of immigrants into the cities, especially Tehran. The sudden check to economic expansion in the mid-1970s disappointed the new arrivals, who had an explanation of their plight in traditional religious terms. But the representation of this combination of modern aspiration and classical theology is a task beyond the visual image. So also the appearance of fostered by pictures of the religious classes conceals a similar dualism which gives rise to broad divisions about the nature of an Islamic policy.

Another essential element which is hidden in both Iran: *Pictorial* and Iran: *La révolution confisquée* is the failure of the Shah to suppress the revolution. In 1963 he systematically shut down urban demonstration, but in 1978 he employed various explanations and his inaction have been put forward but all involve some judgment of his personality.

In 1963 his resolve was strengthened by his conviction that he was repressing the ignorant and selfish opponents of beneficial reforms. In 1978 he was faced with the need to shoot the products of his own reforms; the Shah's majority had spoken against him. If the Shah were merely the wooden figure of these photographs he would not have hesitated; it was because he was a proud, able and, in a curious, humorous way, a caring man that he answered and allowed the revolution to gain head.

One final comment may be made on the photographs themselves. Setboun and Abbas follow the

modern practice of the news photographer in seeking to show the world in extreme. Faces are transfused with joy, contorted with pain, or convulsed by fear or hate; bodies lie crumpled on the streets, stretched out in mortuaries or are revoltingly recognizable as the remains of human beings. Such photographs have often been regarded as the unacceptable exploitation of private tragedy. According to the photographers such a judgment would be misplaced in the case of the Iranian revolution, which re-voiced in agony, publicized its sorrows and welcomed the photographers who would bear witness to its horrors. They associated this feature with the nature of Iranian Shi'ism but perhaps it is yet another example of the coming together of the traditional and the modern in the Islamic revolution.

Charles Olson's most famous work, *The Maximus Poems*, takes as its setting the city of Gloucester, Massachusetts: it was there as a child, his family and in later life returned, to live. Olson's *Gloucester*, a collection of black-and-white photographs by Lynn Swigart, and a foreword by George J. Aronson (1976), is an attempt to recapture Olson's spirit of place. Streets, snow, shorelines, harbours, warehouses, churches, rounded boulders and angular rocks: in a series of shots taken between 1976 and 1978, Swigart looks at both town and sea-scapes. Sherman Paul, in a long and intelligent interview with Swigart and a selection of photographs, suggests that the link between the pictures and the poetry is "an eroticizing of landscape".

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In the puppeteer's pavilion

By John Ryle

IRVING PENN:
Worlds in a Small Room
93pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
01 436 36633 9

The Western myth of non-Westerners' antipathy to the camera "the little black box that steals souls" may be almost as old as photography itself, for anthropological exploitation of the new technology followed close on its invention in the 1840s: *The People of India*, an eight-volume photographic survey initiated by Lord Canning in 1855, was published in 1868, *China and its People* by John Thomson in 1873-74. In "Observers of Man", a recent exhibition of photographs from the collection of the Royal Anthropological Institute, a remarkable range of work by early ethnologists-photographers was displayed. The principal concern of these pioneers was physical anthropology—they intended to steal bodies rather than souls. In the catalogue to the exhibition (£2.40 from the RAI, 56 Queen Anne Street, London W1, ISBN 0 90032 19 4) Roslyn Poignant describes a portrait of one of the last five surviving Tasmanians, taken in 1866:

There is an element of confrontation in her steady gaze. It is known that Truganini, who outlived her companions, dreaded the consequences of being the object of scientific interest and morbid curiosity. The graves of her people had been robbed of their bones, and she feared the same thing would happen to her.

By contrast, the pictures of Solomon Island youths taken by a naval lieutenant, Henry Somerville, have a more relaxed quality:

Their pose is an open self-conscious act of participation in their own caricature. Their narcissism is a reflection of a particular cultural pattern of behaviour... and although Somerville's encounter with the society was a passing one, the photographs suggest a degree of awareness, perhaps subconscious, in the young naval officer's response to his subjects.

The ambiguous impulse on the part of the photographer and the dual response of the subject to the invading lens are still very much in evidence. And none only among tribal peoples—market workers in New Orleans duck down to avoid

the hex that pictures can put on them, leaving the photographer with a still-life of watermelons, while on the same street flirtatious struts and loafs in an attempt to gain the attention of the camera. The evil eye and the evil eye are both ubiquitous. Working with a photographer in a tribal society, as I have done recently, it is possible to observe in non-verbal the rituals of seduction that engender both excitement and terror in the subject. Nowadays the soul-stealer's equipment—a small camera and a long lens—resembles a gun more than a box while artificial lights and motor drive aid the copula between lecher and his prey. Multiple exposures make the selection of the image a matter of editing after the fact rather than one of tripping the shutter exactly at the vital moment. A certain loss of vigour in the consensual relation between photographer and subject is evident, for instance in Leni Riefenstahl's glossy ethnograph *The Last of the Nuba* and *The People of Kari*. There is beauty in these books, but no character; background but no context.

Irving Penn's portraits in *Worlds in a Small Room*, which range from Andean Indians to Highland Tribesmen of New Guinea, were originally published in *Vogue* and might be expected to reflect a similar crude appropriation of the primitive. They are, however, very different: posed, monochrome, they have an archaic look, sometimes reminiscent of the pictures in "Observers of Man" and a seriousness that commands attention. This is partly because Penn is not a paparazzo or a photo-journalist but a studio photographer to the extent of taking a collapsible studio with him where he cannot find one in situ. Into this strange pavilion, open to the sun on the north side, he entices his subjects, shorn of their backgrounds, their expressions uniform. No one smiles; they gaze—men, women and children, Gypsies, Nepalis, Cretons and Ileites of Asia, with an air of intense fear, as though they were about to step through the looking glass.

Penn's cleverness in creating such a space—a black box—and catching the moment when his subjects slip momentarily out of their own control, the simple, and single achievement of *Worlds in a Small Room*. The book contains nothing of ethnographic interest and the captions ("noble young beauty of such-and-such a tribe"), are absurd. In his description of the procedure

he adopted in his photographic sessions, Penn emerges neither as ethnographer nor photographer but as a kind of puppeteer:

The subjects my helpers brought me would sometimes shake with nervousness at the idea of posing. Their bodies actually became rigid with fear... I posed the subjects by hand, moving and bending them. Their muscles were stiff and resistant and the effort it took on my part was considerable.

The most revealing photographs are those taken by his assistants of Penn arranging the limbs of his subjects. What is revealed is not simply that Penn did not try to pretend he wasn't there, but that he did not mask his purpose with seductive tricks nor try to ally the self-consciousness of his subjects with his own. They all know they are sitting—or standing or lying—for their portraits and this translation of their selves into his images is no laughing matter. The anthropologist Edmund Carver, who observed Penn's working methods in New Guinea and described them in a remarkable book, *Oh! What a Beautiful Planet* (1976) writes:

The moment subjects stepped across that threshold they changed totally. All confusion and excitement ceased. Even those outside became still. A sudden intensity possessed everyone.

The same subject who moments before posed comically for tourists, affecting exaggerated poses, now behaved with intense concentration. The veiled women of Morocco completely protect themselves. With them nothing is revealed—a paradox Penn clearly finds pleasing, since he has put this picture on the cover of the book. In other pictures their menfolk watch the birds with hunter's eyes, as expressions as the camera itself. They emerge from the black box with their souls intact.

Worlds in a Small Room is neither demanding nor glamorous. Its subjects, Penn imagines, are without words—if by only their subject and their concentration (his subjects were able to say much that spanned the gap between our different worlds). But the trust message in these photographs is one of distance, a warning against the facile appropriation of other people's worlds that more rapacious photographers have made by blandishment or force.

day sight in Peking streets thirty years ago—beside a treelined canal become "camels at a watering place in the desert... where they are just as normal a feature of the landscape as they are in the deserts of North Africa and the Arab countries."

But the photographs themselves are both composed and reproduced superbly, even if frequent recourse to under-exposed *contre-jour* now and then results in excessive spreads of dark brown. Apart from that solitary falling, every picture is a scene of Peking, Yangtze gorges, Kwailin limestone, exquisite landscapes of mist-swathed crags tufted with stark or ethereal pine-trees that used to inspire Chinese brush-and-ink paintings, through snow melting on pinecones, of the old city lying leaden across its rolling hills; palaces and temples, rock-hewn Buddhas and museum exhibits witness and Sung's parade, scar-dancers swirling, Peking opera backstage, Peking ducks (with chef's back view); the newly excavated tomb of the First Emperor with its life-size Chaldean, but-wrongly-said against a green Hanian sunset; and derrick against a crimson lantern sunset. The list of photographers' names discloses no individual credits—these lovely pictures are a "socialist" masterpiece.

For the same reason, however, when it comes to the rarer pictures of people, there is only one not obviously contrived—a snap of a young woman in a yellow dress, through congested traffic, along Shanghai's Nanjing Road—and there is no sign of the "human

camels" straining before laden carts that are still an everyday sight in all China's city streets. In another shot of the park further up Nanjing Road, two couples, carefully matched in dress, the girls bourgeois-permed, sit relaxed, courting on well-built benches. In reality, the benches in that park have no backs, and the shy couples who court there awkwardly on days of their proletarian clothes, the girls that glimmer in the laundered and blouse—ought I to have met her among the grubby pickers on the Chung King tea estate last year? Chunging peasant girls stride barefoot but in beautiful "native" field, whereas the red peasants in their muddy black garb can just be made out in the background, gesticulating from the backs of a stationary point while the quarry sits a few feet in front, upper-turbed, and their "house" of the picture, Tibetan lamas stand outside their respective places of worship, posed in conversation like a Wei Lan-fang stage-set.

The last picturebook I recall to carry the simple title *China* came out fifteen years ago—Henri Cartier-Bresson's casual glimpses of Chinese people, "snapped in years and by day, and ten years after, liberation. For the photographer's art, for sincerity, and for life, the earlier, little daily excellent; the new *China* stands out as a propaganda skill with lens and colour-printer's craft.

Pride in appearance

By Malcolm McLeod

CAROL BECKWITH (photographs)
TEPILIT OLE SAITOTTI (text)
Masaai
276pp. 240 illustrations. Elm Tree Books. £18.50.
0 241 10498 X

The presentation of exotic peoples by photography has a long history. Within a few years of their invention cameras began to be carried by hunters and explorers; later few anthropologists ventured into the field without cameras. Although the photographs produced served to supplement, correct and finally replace the image of alien peoples previously conveyed by drawings and paintings, until recently many of these photographs helped maintain a distance between the white viewer and the people depicted. A few braver men, however, occupied a border area between straightforward documentation and pornography: nakedness, bodily deformations and mutilations, trophies of violence (slain victims, cases of exotic diseases) were photographed only while doing something which to the European appeared alien or extraordinary. Photographers concentrated on depicting rituals and ceremonies, organized in full (and rarely worn) costume or arranged vast, unnatural poses for photography. All this tended to outweigh the fewer published pictures of people heedlessly going about their everyday business and expressing spontaneous tenderness and affection.

The Masaai of East Africa are, by any reckoning, one of the most famous of all African peoples. Since European first encountered them in the middle of the last century they have become celebrated for their physical beauty and proud and disdainful independence. In popular

thought they are known as cow-keepers and cattle-drovers, a people who place great value on masculine bravery and toughness. The Masaai book has been compiled by cooperation between Carol Beckwith, an American photographer and painter, and Tepilit Ole Saitotti, an Masaai man and painter. Carol Beckwith is an ideal subject for such a photograph: they live in a country of lush beauty, their physical and Western ideas of grace and have fiercely resisted the adoption of Western clothes and customs. But more important than this is the fact that Masaai men actively spend much of their lives posing and working to impress themselves in the way they pass through the society's various styles of dress and body decoration appropriate to each stage in their lives. They are striving to show their beauty and fortitude by posture and appearance.

Women adorn their heads and torsos with vast arrays of beads and jewelry. Cattle are branded and decorated not only to show ownership but also to enhance their beauty. The society is tolerant of a photograph for its members are almost always in full dress, up, consciously striking a pose.

All this is recorded in Carol Beckwith's excellent photographs, reproduced to a very high standard. Tepilit Ole Saitotti, for his part, provides a detailed and well-balanced account of his people's life and customs, and shows the complexity and subtlety of many areas of their culture. But the great success of the book lies in the way both show the less formalized parts of Masaai life, moments of tenderness and play, of domestic duties and ordinary daily life. Masaai warriors in their pride are here, but so are the women of files that afflict everyone, by covering both extremes of local life this magnificently produced book is a most useful as well as enjoyable help to understanding the Masaai.

Images of the Orient

By Dervla Murphy

ROLAND AND SABRINA MICHAUD:
Afghanistan
102 illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £18.
0 500 54067 5

PASCAL MARECHAUX:
Arabia Felix
86 illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £18.
0 300 24107 4

ROSEMARY JONES TUNG with photographs by ILYA TOLSTOY and BROOKE DOLAN:
A Portrait of Lost Tibet
223pp. 131 photographs. Thames and Hudson. £8.95.
0 500 54068 3

Everyone who knows and loves Afghanistan will look upon Roland and Sabrina Michaud's photographs with an aching heart. The beauty depicted here—of face and costume, of landscape and craftsmanship, of life lived harshly yet with dignity—is even now being obliterated. Afghanistan is, of course, a vast country; huge areas, and many of the remotest villages, must remain vividly distinct. But its essence—so vividly distinct in these photographs, and so often unperceived by the scramble of Western journalists—who have invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the Russians—cannot long survive the imposition of totalitarianism. It was based on a sense of freedom of the spirit that is apparent in the book's pictures of the faces of tribesmen and merchants, nomads and villagers, children and derelicts.

Arabia Felix is less satisfying. It, too, is a collection of splendidly professional photographs; but they are less inspired—more standardized—less human and geographical variety than Afghanistan. However, Pascal Marechaux's book is more helpful than the Michauds: it provides

fewer facts, but takes us closer, in an impressionistic way, to the feeling of the country.

A Portrait of Lost Tibet is one of those books that have given coffee-tables a bad name. The text is meant to be important—though less so than the illustrations—but, being flaccid, banal and not always accurate, it merely detracts from a remarkable photographic record of Tibetan life in the early 1940s.

In 1942, after the cutting of the Burma Road, President Roosevelt decided to investigate the possibility of transporting military supplies from India to China via Tibet. Any aid relief map would have instantly made it plain that this was a huge idea; but the President's astounding topographical innocence was left untouched and his government blithely organized a Diplomatic Mission to Tibet. This was led by Ilya Tolstoy, a grandson of Leo Tolstoy, and it crossed Tibet from Darjeeling to Lanchow. But it is incorrect to claim, as Robert Payne does in his foreword, that these Americans "had the luck to travel where no Westerner had ever been before." Alexander David-Neel's Tibetan journeys were far more extensive and took him into the same regions. And in 1932-33, exactly half-century before the Tolstoy journey, Annie Taylor, an English missionary, walked more than 1,300 miles from Tachau to Tashkent, and then to Kogu, Tash Gomba and Nagachuka.

The Tolstoy diplomatic mission was, inevitably, a failure. But it returned with over 2,000 black-and-white photographs, of which 131 are reproduced here. In her introduction Rosemary Jones Tung asserts that these photographs "constitute the best pictorial study of Tibetan civilization in existence." In range and sheer quantity they may be so, though some excellent Tibetan nobles from the 1940s and 1950s. *A Portrait of Lost Tibet* is not unique, as the publishers would have us believe. In fact, Marjorie's *Secret Tibet*—many of the sixty photographs—taken during the late 1940s—are more impressive than those of the Tolstoy expedition.

Emanations of the real

By Stephen Bann

ROLAND BARTHES:
La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie
193pp. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma/Gallimard/Seuil

La chambre claire is Roland Barthes' last major work, published only a few days before his death in March of this year. The temptation to turn it into a kind of testament is almost irresistible. Although it represents itself modestly as a note on photography, it is in fact an extraordinarily subtle and wide-ranging essay on the medium which engaged Barthes' attention at successive stages in his career. But it is much more than that. In expressing his "astonishment" with repeated photography, Barthes also celebrates a conjunction in French thought and letters which is both distinctive and important. The journalists already have a phrase for it: "le retour du réel".

It would not doubt be a relatively simple matter to present *La chambre claire* as the concluding and conclusive statement of a renegade theorist who had abandoned the radical programme of his early research, of a "Lost Leader" who turned his coat against the rank and file who enthusiastically pursued his method. One could probably use the same evidence to clutch the

accusation that the once progressive Barthes became a reactionary, "exclaiming in his final hours: 'O semiology, how many crimes are committed in thy name!'". But this would be a gross distortion. Far from closing the page upon a mis-spent past, he uses this book to review and extend some of the most penetrating insights of his earlier work. The critical apparatus of the "scientific" Barthes is virtually absent. But the challenge to conventional assumptions about the history of representation is indeed radical and pervasive.

Let us make no mistake about it: his repudiation of a certain orthodoxy that has grown up around his early writings from *Mythologies* to the influential essay, "Rhetoric of the Image". The bizarre BBC publication, *Ways of Seeing*, epitomizes the tone of this latter-day "School of Barthes" which hands out diluted doses of Walter Benjamin for beginners: "The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject." Barthes does not so much deny this statement as assert its triviality and inadequacy. "Sociologists and semiologists" in his view, have scorned the "realist" interpretation of photography, insisting that the photograph is always a coded message and not an *analogon* of the real world. But they have entirely neglected the true point at issue: *Coûté au vain: rien ne peut empêcher que la Photographie soit analogue; mais on même temps, le nom de la Photographie n'est nullement dans l'analogie*. ... Les réalistes, dont je suis, et

dont j'étais déjà lorsque j'affirmais que la Photographie était une image sans code—même si, c'est évident, des codes viennent en infirmer la lecture—ne prennent pas du tout la photo pour une copie du réel—mais pour une émanation du réel passé: une magie, non un art. Se demander si la photographie est analogue ou codée n'est pas une bonne voie d'analyse. L'important, c'est que la photo possède une force consistante, et que le constat de la Photographie porte, non sur l'objet, mais sur le temps.

Here, we must concede, Barthes is not simply trying to confuse the doxa of much contemporary research. He is also seeking to retrieve from apparent contradiction the position which he established in his early essays on the photograph. Did he not suggest in "Rhetoric of the Image" that claims as to the magical character of the photographic image must be deflated? Why does he advance them now? An even more striking example can be found. In the same article, the photograph is described as "in no way a presence". In *La chambre claire* we read, on the contrary, that "Toute photographie est un certificat de présence. Ce certificat est le gène nouveau que son invention a introduit dans la famille des images." Why this ontological insistence, which is no less unequivocal than the earlier denials?

The answer is, in part, that Barthes has succeeded in bringing to the surface some of the latent problems of his earlier work—prob-

lems which are also implicit in some of the formulations of Benjamin. *Storia della fotografia*. After all, what follows if we decide to regard the photograph essentially as a restitution of time (the "having-been-there") rather than as a representation of space? Clearly we render problematic the whole relationship between photography and the visual arts. Benjamin sidesteps this issue of "unresolved tension" by scrutinizing the effects of mechanical reproduction on the "aura" of the traditional oil painting. But Barthes takes the more radical step of dissociating photography not only from the visual arts but from any conception of "art" at all. To elevate photography as an art form is for him to deprive it of the "madness" that is the mark of its unique relation to time. Consequently the point of interest is not photography, in general, but certain photographs—the ones that got away. The fine illustrations to *La chambre claire* demonstrate, in their different ways, how the photograph can avoid "domestication".

This categorical distinction makes us further doubt one of Barthes' long maintained assumptions: that there is a dichotomy between photography and the cinema, the still and the moving picture. Barthes comes close to conceding that the one holds the key to the other: the cinema qualifies itself as an art, the "seventh art", and is not inherent in the properties of the moving picture as such. It is indeed surprising how far Barthes' "realism" has converged

with that of France's leading post-war critic of the cinema, André Bazin. In *What is Cinema?*, Bazin refers to the use of the analogy between photography and the Turin Shroud ("not made with hands") as unavoidable reminiscence of the earlier writer. Equally, Barthes' identification of the photograph as opposed to "fictional cinema" coincides at certain points with a counter-movement which has emerged within the cinema itself, and of which the recent *Cahiers du cinéma* devoted to Marguerite Duras gives ample evidence.

Yet it would be a distortion of the purpose of *La chambre claire* to confine discussion to the constellation of the visual arts. There is one photograph which Barthes does not illustrate, although its discovery is, in a sense, the central event of his mother, who had died in the previous year; yet not a photograph, but the photograph—the image of a small girl in 1898 which alone, and inexplicably, restores his mother to him. The discourse of *La chambre claire* revolves around this absent photograph. For, as Barthes tells us, language is irretrievably fictional. It offers no proofs, no form of self-authentication. It is null beside the "sure, but fleeting testimony" of the photograph. This is also, Barthes parenthetically concedes, its "volupté". Siren-like, it beckons us to an encounter with the real which we can never consummate, but of which we would not readily abandon the promise.

Peculiarly objective

By David Gascoyne

YVETTE BORHAN:
Voyons voir
126pp. Paris: Créatis.
2 639 7596

JANUS (Editor):
Man Ray: The Photographic Image
230pp. Gordon Fraser. £8.85.
0 86092 045 3

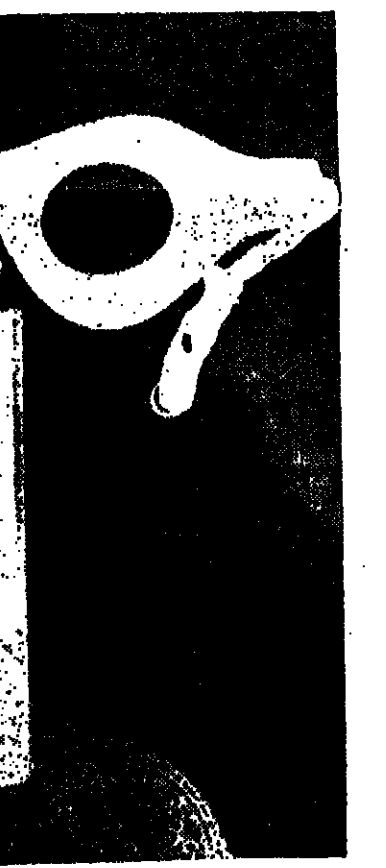
Here are two unusually handsome and in a sense complementary collections of photographs. In his interview with William Klein, born in New York in 1928, M. Borhan quotes Susan Sontag as saying that photographs are not capable of supplying, by themselves alone, a foundation for any moral standpoint, but can help to establish such a thing or support it when it becomes apparent; to which Klein makes a very pertinent reply, ending with the suggestion that perhaps Sontag secretly disdains photography because she cannot do what writing does: "Which is true," admits Klein, "but the opposite's true too." He goes on to discuss Roland Barthes, who referred specifically to Klein's work in his book on photography, and concludes:

All he [Barthes] wants to see is the document: clothes, hair, shoes. No objection to that. I try to put a whole lot of things into a photograph. They're there as they are everywhere in every once of life. I think I know what I've put there. Whether you see it or see something else, it's perfectly normal. The way one reads a photo, like anything else, is a personal affair. And what I like about Barthes is that he sees what he wants and justifies himself with glee.

Of the eight interviews, which make up the book, the one with Klein is the most interesting, and I wish I had room to quote more. Elsewhere, Marc Ribout, because M. Borhan and Barthes, though he considers the latter to have gone a bit too far in grouping in a single category what the structuralist has termed "photos unaires," reports that the most memorable of the forty photos selected by M. Borhan include one by de la Place entitled "Les gosses de la Place d'Alsace 1957" (which might almost be an exact image of three kids at a street-corner in an underprivileged district of Liverpool, or any other big city of the west, con-fronting recession), and the earlier picture of Klein of the communist leader Thorez's funeral in Paris, 1964. No matter what "Doisneau

thinks he thinks of Klein, the affinity between the two pictures is as striking as the pictures themselves. And they both illustrate the fact that however hard a photographer may try to keep all political bias out of his work, some degree of social comment is implicit in personality, in fact his subjectivity, not only enters his work, so that after only a hasty acquaintance his special feels able to distinguish his special identity, but also affects his judgments concerning his own and other photographers' art, to such an extent that to disabuse one of any idea one might have had about the peculiar objectivity of photography, it hardly seems necessary to refer to the forty photos selected by M. Borhan.

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Rayograph 1923

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M. Borhan's compilation is to be recommended both to the photographer buff and to anyone concerned with the plight of contemporary culture. Strangely, although almost all of the photographers represented refer to their admiration for or sense of indebtedness to Cartier-Bresson, Brassai, Weston, Brandt, Arget, Diane Arbus and others, no mention is ever made of M. Ray, the dadaist-surrealist American who, according to the Venice Biennale album's back-cover, was "one of the great masters of the photographic medium... who overcame or simply ignored all supposed

barriers". Before speculating about the reasons for this indifference or even hostility among Pierre Borhan's acolytes, let us say that to me at least, the dozen or so collection is André Kertész; and I cannot resist quoting his reply to M. Borhan's question as to whether genius can be said to exist in photography: "Oui! En tout art, c'est la vision qui compte." Besides this veteran and William Klein, M. Borhan has talked to Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis, Marc Ribout, Edouard Boubard, J. H. Lartigue and Guy Le Querrec.

Since the Biennale of 1977, at which Man Ray was represented as first and foremost a photographer, there has been a smaller but more varied Man Ray retrospective in Paris, which contained a considerable number of paintings, drawings and objects as well as many of his best photographs and "Rayographs". So that the show was able to remind one, as the Venetian album does not adequately, that here was (little though the young "anti-art" dadaist would have cared for the description) a born artist, maker and a man who sometimes apparently self-contradictorily but truly human being.

Man Ray's achievement outside the photographic field was fully appreciated not long ago in a book by Sir Ronald Penrose. But about the camera work, the Venetian Biennale's magazine, founded in 1903 and still resolutely in the avant-garde during the First World War) of Man Ray, it should be observed that though it resulted in photographs that may be fairly divided into a number of categories, ranging from the once daringly experimental to a cool neo-classicism quite close to that of Sir Cecil Beaton at his best, he seems never to have focused his lens on landscapes (even urban ones), and never has a "reportage" which appears to have become the photographic mainstream.

The distinction between reportage and documentary may not be as easily drawn as professionals suppose; but at least it is clear that Man Ray has made a capital contribution to the surrealism of the twentieth century with his unsurpassed portrait-photographs of most of the key cultural figures of our time: all the dadaists, including the sphinx-like Duchamp, and later Chirico, the nonsurrealist, and as for the official surrealists, most notably Breton, Eluard, Péret, Crevel, Arp, Ernst, Dalí, Tanguy, Magritte and Giacometti; but also Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Erik Satie, Schönberg, Eisenstein, Sinclair Lewis, Gertrude Stein, Breton, Henry Miller, great painters like Matisse,

Picasso and Braque; and a few exceptional "cité society" beauties, intellectual or eccentric, such as Iris Tree and, though she doesn't properly belong to this group but to that of the surrealists, Lee Miller, later herself a fine photographer and the second wife of Roland Penrose.

Nearly all these pictures are surely classics of their kind, though perhaps their "cité society" studio portrait quality is one of the reasons why the photographers earlier referred to appear not to number themselves among Man Ray's admirers. If, incidentally, Man Ray turned out an occasional stunning fashion plate for *Vogue* or *Harpers*, his intransigent surrealist friends never dreamed of excommunicating him for having compromised his integrity. And although he never ceased landscapes as subjects, Man Ray's love of nature is so apparent from a number of his studies of flowers and fruit; while no imputation of "glossiness" could possibly be suggested by his severe records of mathematical objects and chess pieces.

There is an important brief work, *Glimmers*, by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, which may not yet be known to many English readers, although it was published here last year. In it I found this quotation from Finkel's *Concentric Propositions* of ten years ago, which will seem to me to hint succinctly at what is my own essential feeling about photography: "I see myself in the world, moving through the scene; the 'living' image. But it is always 'that one' that I see (there is no photograph of the soul). The I Am remains invisible... sent on a journey, it heads towards the country of dreams and fantasy." The idea of a photograph of the soul raises questions as deep and as old as the world, why it never occurred to the surrealists to unearth the fantastic alleged séance photographs of "ectoplasm" taken round about the turn of the century by Schrenck-Nöbling, and a report of them as early examples of the surrealist photograph. The flat refusal of the surrealists (including Man Ray, tolerantly indifferent though he was to most of the personal tenets or inclinations of others) to admit the existence of the supernatural or the transcendent Being (since their "super-reality" is as dogmatically materialist as their psychology is strictly Freudian) could never allow them to admit the possibility of a Jungian animus, or a psyche inhabiting the mortal flesh which their lineaments were imprinted.

